



Louis Schanker (American, 1903–1981)

Louis Schanker was a key figure in the resurgence of interest in the color relief print. As a technically innovative printmaker and as a teacher, he influenced many of the artists in this exhibition. Trained at Cooper Union, the Education Alliance, and the Art Students League, he made his first woodcut in 1935, a challenging seven-color print, which already reflected his appreciation for the School of Paris (he traveled abroad from 1931 to 1933), German Expressionism, and the Japanese woodcut. Though his early imagery was figurative, his work became increasingly abstract, concerned with Cubist distortions of form and space, realized with bright colors and tactile surfaces. While a member of the Graphic Arts Division of the Federal Art Project, and later the supervisor of color woodblock printing there, he developed new printing techniques. He layered oil-based inks on top of each other, often before the previous layer had dried, to realize dense, inky surfaces; he also printed colors over black ink, giving the colors a special luminosity. For a time Schanker shared a teaching studio at the New School with Stanley William Hayter, another passionate experimenter, though with intaglio processes. Schanker believed that “The possibility of invention ... is one of the most intriguing aspects of the woodcut.”

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Forms in Action

Woodcut for Works Progress Administration, Federal Art Project, 1941

Gift to The New York Public Library

Indian Dance

Color woodcut for Works Progress Administration, Federal Art Project, 1941

Gift to The New York Public Library

Skaters

Color woodcut for Works Progress Administration, Federal Art Project, 1941

Gift to The New York Public Library

Static & Revolving

Color woodcut, 1945–46

Norrie Fund, purchased from the artist

With this print, Schanker began a series of studies of circular movement.

He explored variations on this image throughout the 1950s.



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Circle Image

Color woodcut, issued by the International Graphic Arts Society (IGAS), 1952

Norrie Fund, purchased from the artist